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THE MASK

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COMICS PRESENTS

THE MAXX™

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THE MAXX #10. AUGUST 1994. FIRST PRINTING. An Image Comics title published by Image Comics. Entire contents
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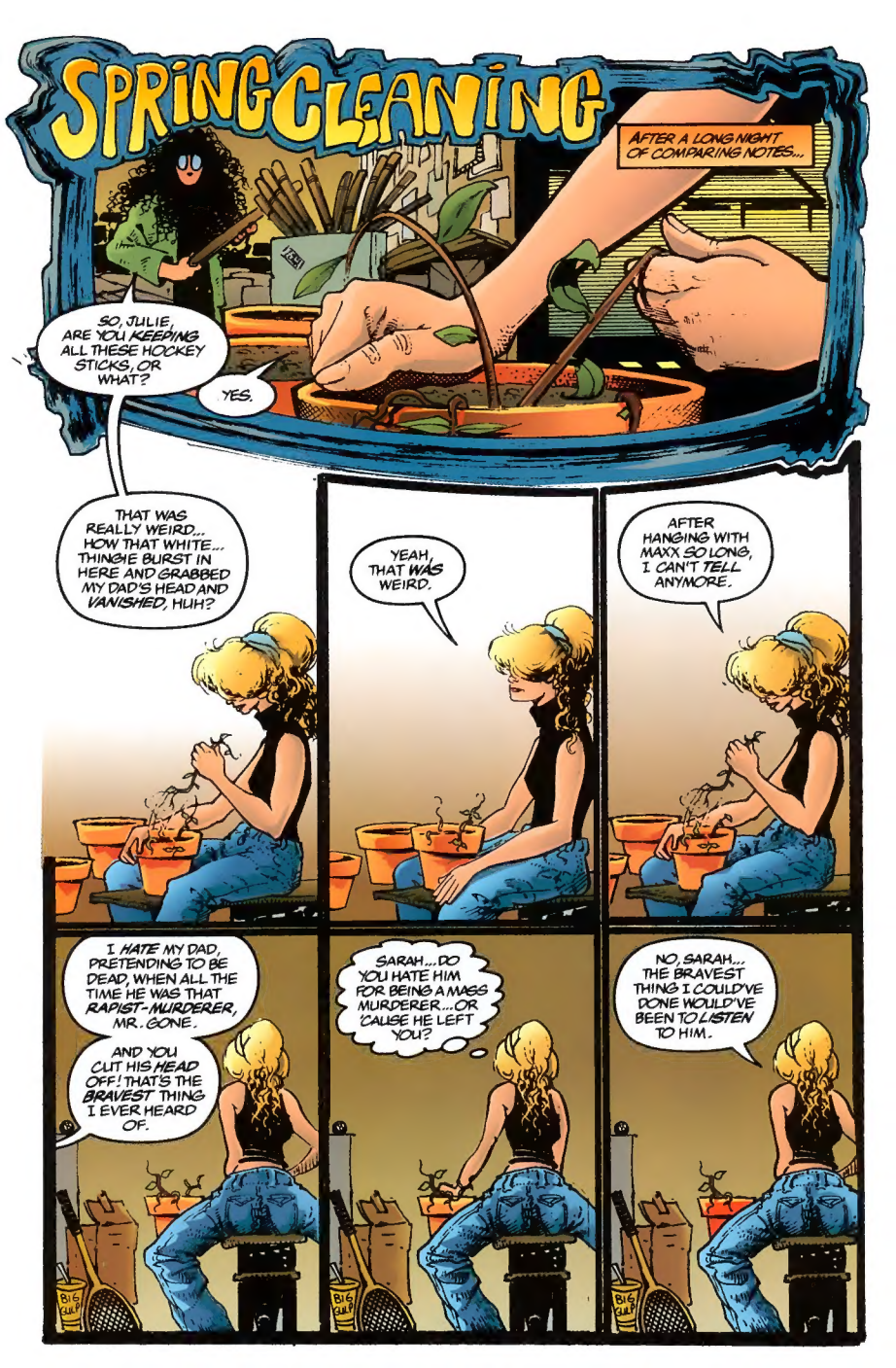
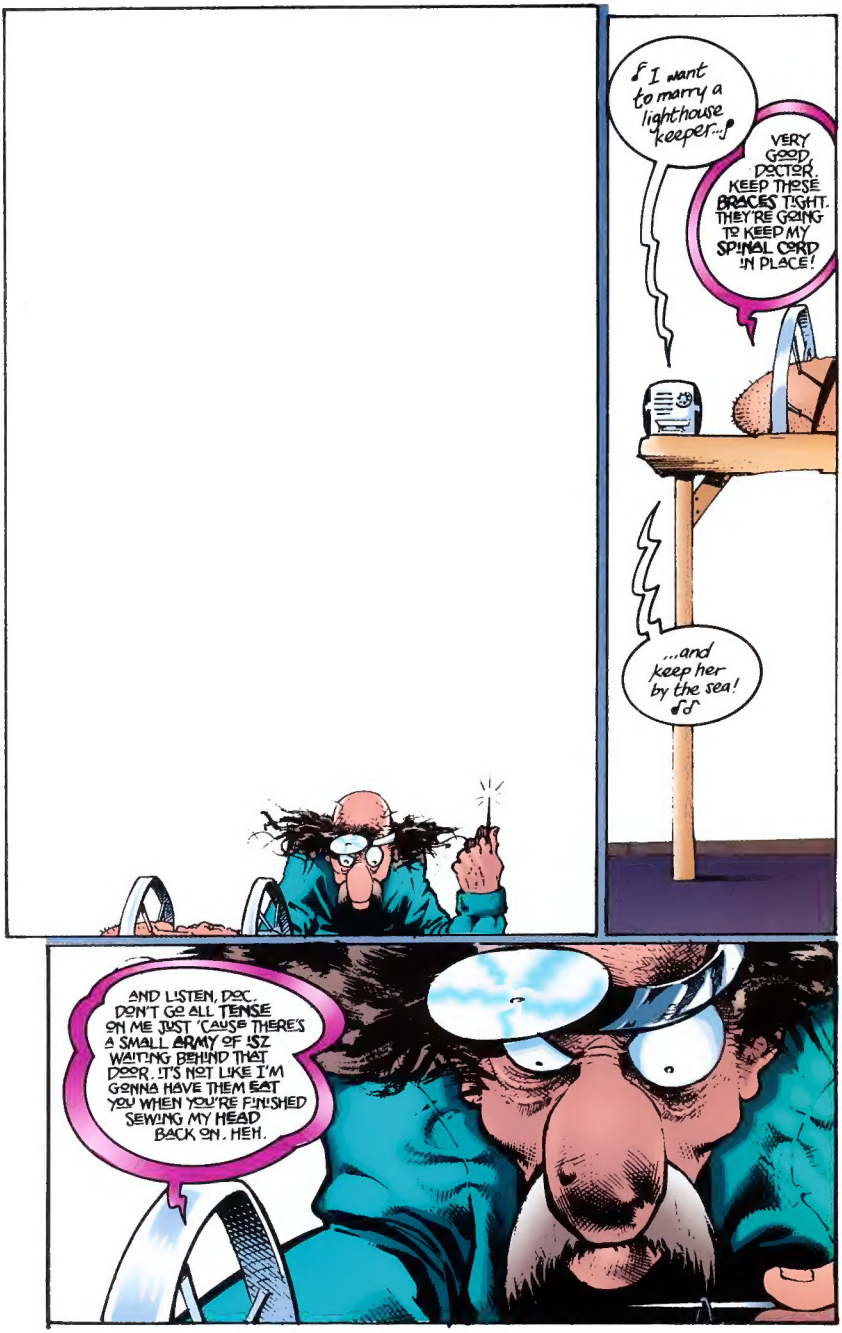
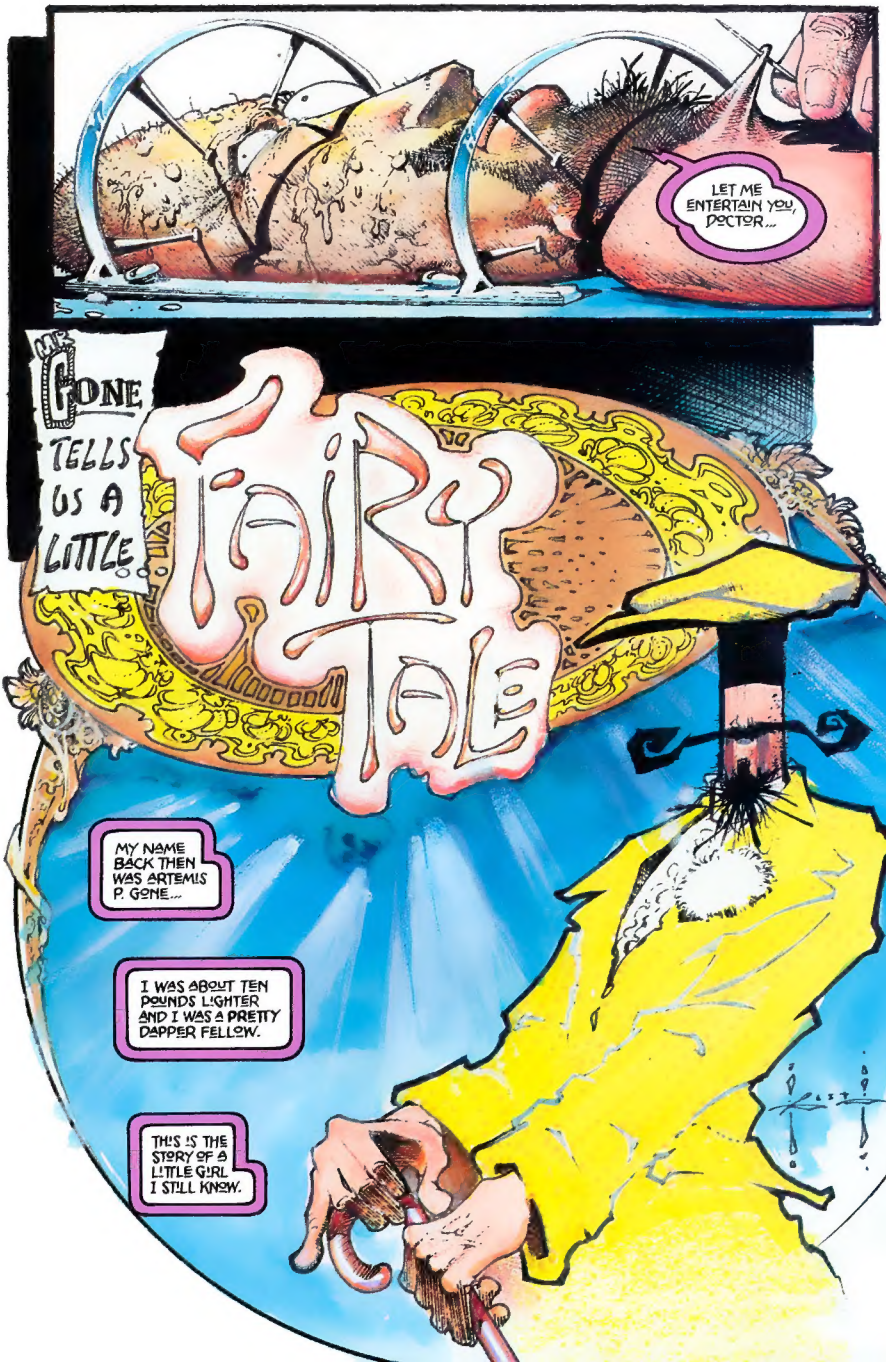
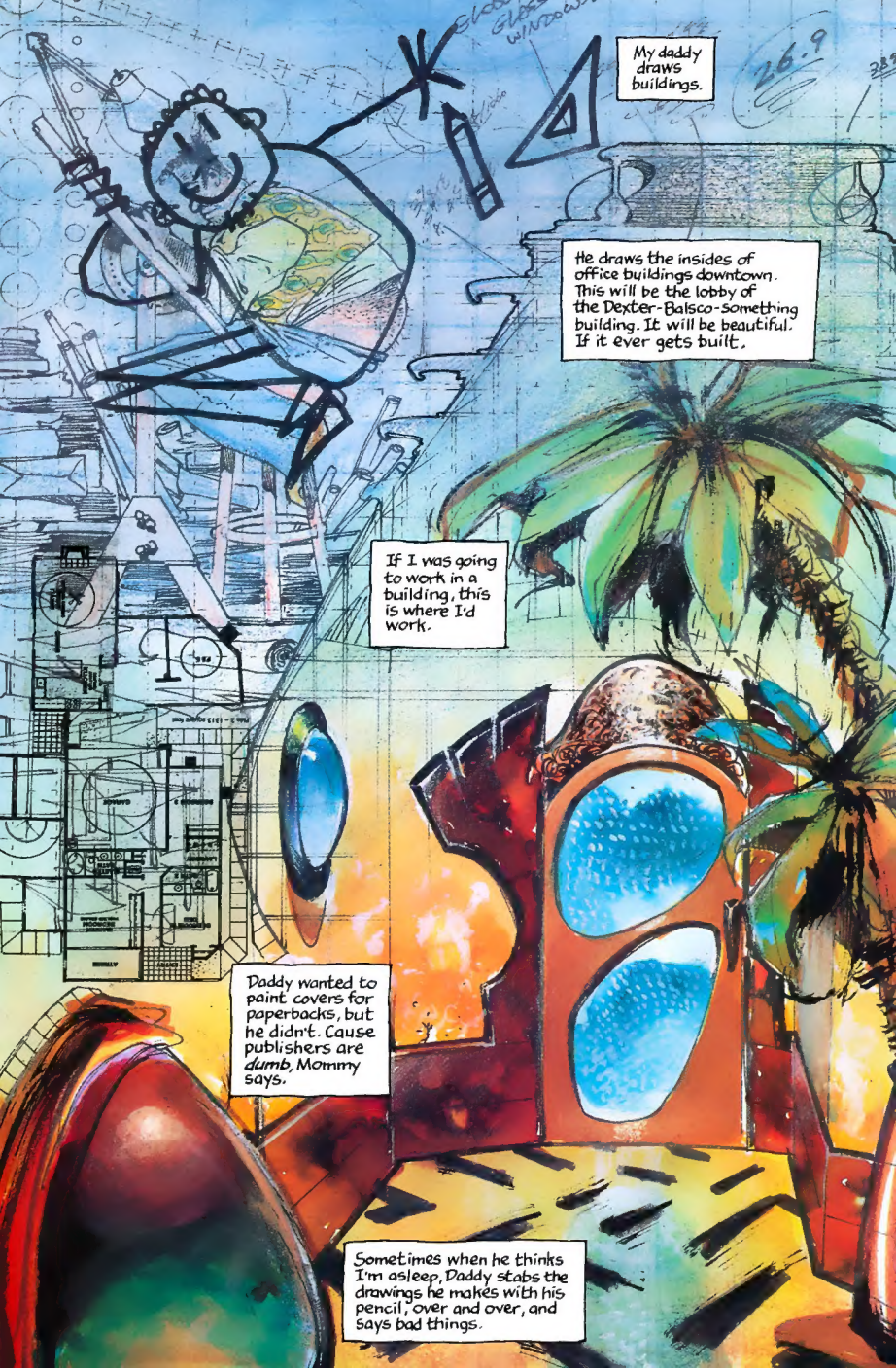
Printed in Canada

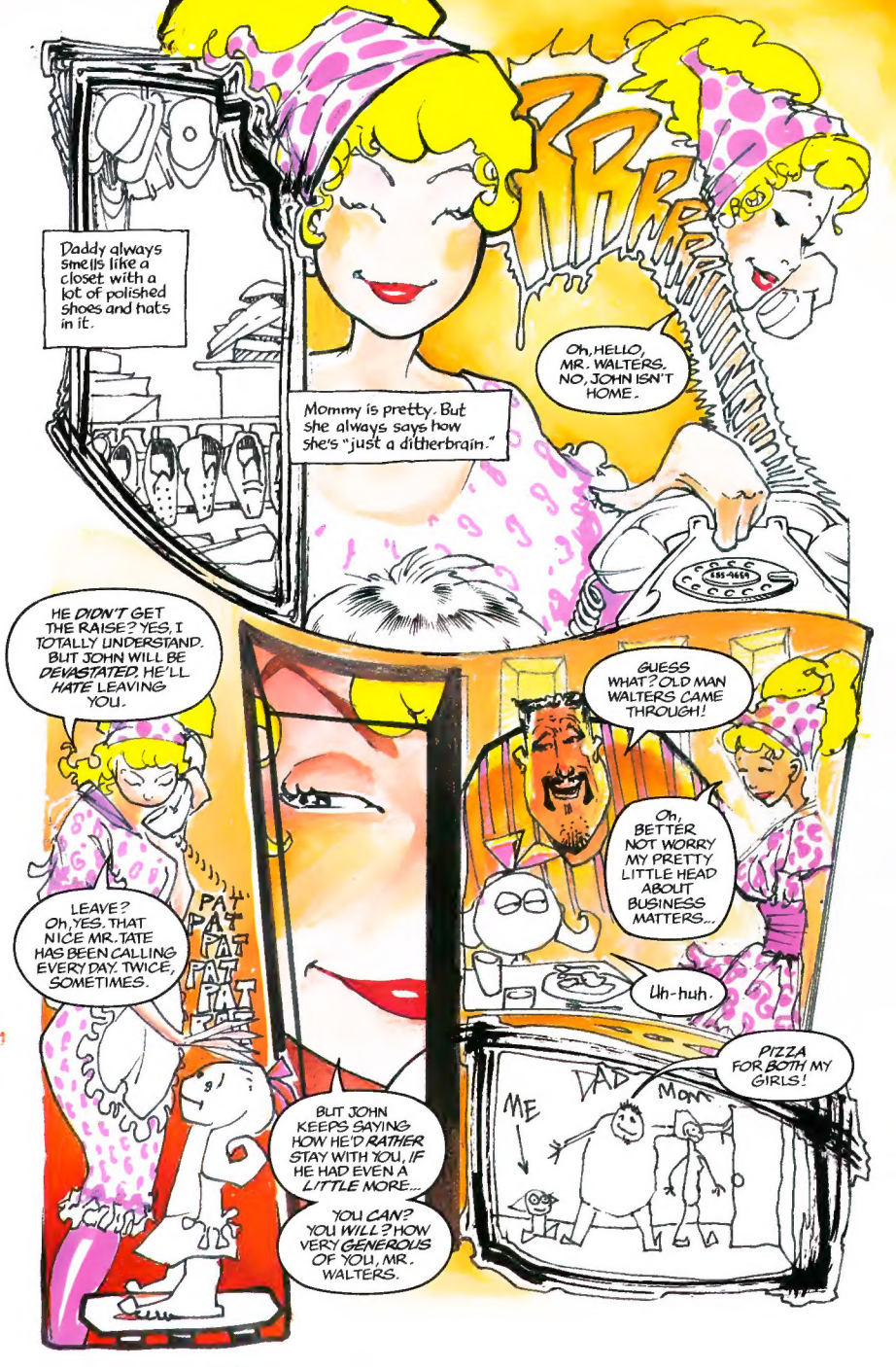

SPRING CLEANING
AFTER A LONG NIGHT OF COMPARING NOTES...
SO, JULIE, ARE YOU KEEPING ALL THESE HOCKEY STICKS, OR WHAT?
YES.
THAT WAS REALLY WEIRD... HOW THAT WHITE... THINGIE BURST IN HERE AND GRABBED MY DAD'S HEAD AND VANISHED, HUH?
YEAH, THAT WAS WEIRD.
AFTER HANGING WITH MAXX SO LONG, I CAN'T TELL ANYMORE.
I HATE MY DAD, PRETENDING TO BE DEAD, WHEN ALL THE TIME HE WAS THAT RAPIST-MURDERER, MR. GONE.
AND YOU CUT HIS HEAD OFF! THAT'S THE BRAVEST THING I EVER HEARD OF.
SARAH... DO YOU HATE HIM FOR BEING A MASS MURDERER... OR 'CAUSE HE LEFT YOU?
NO, SARAH... THE BRAVEST THING I COULD'VE DONE WOULD'VE BEEN TO LISTEN TO HIM.
BIG GULP
BIG GULP
BIG GULP


♪I want to marry a lighthouse keeper...♪
VERY GOOD, DOCTOR. KEEP THESE BRACES TIGHT. THEY'RE GOING TO KEEP MY SPINAL CORD IN PLACE!
...and keep her by the sea! ♪♫
AND LISTEN, DOC. DON'T GO ALL TENSE ON ME JUST 'CAUSE THERE'S A SMALL ARMY OF ISZ WAITING BEHIND THAT DOOR. IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GONNA HAVE THEM EAT YOU WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED SEWING MY HEAD BACK ON. HEH.


LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU, DOCTOR...
MR. GONE TELLS US A LITTLE FAIRY TALE
MY NAME BACK THEN WAS ARTEMUS P. GONE...
I WAS ABOUT TEN POUNDS LIGHTER AND I WAS A PRETTY DAPPER FELLOW.
THIS IS THE STORY OF A LITTLE GIRL I STILL KNOW.

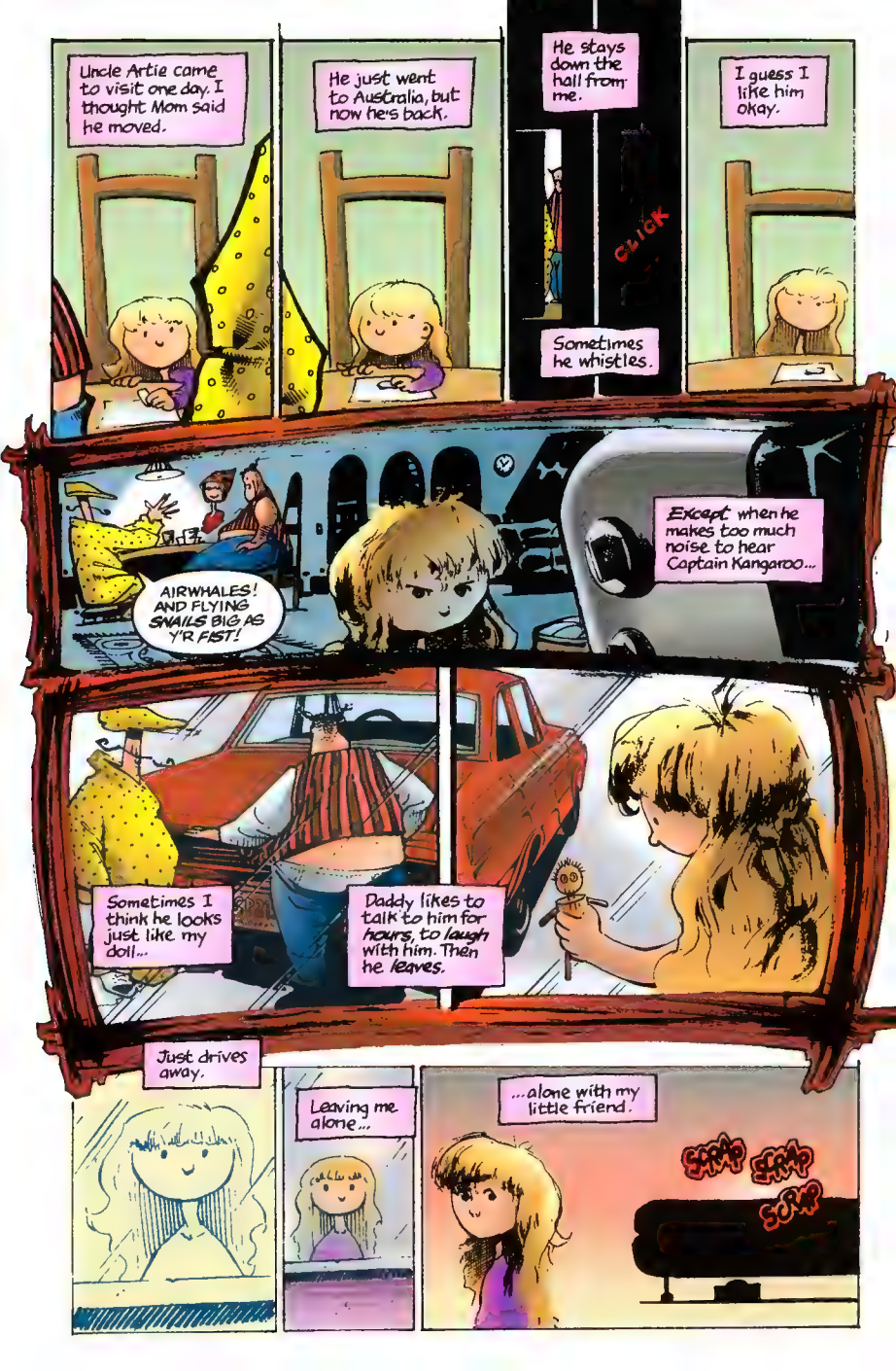
ME....AND..MY..FAMILY
Hi, you remember me.
There's our house.
Mommy
Daddy
My room.
I love the old elm just outside it.
I sit under it sometimes and pretend I'm a jungle queen, and have adventures.
Then I come back inside and cuddle in bed, and I'm safe.
My bed is big.


My daddy draws buildings.
He draws the insides of office buildings downtown. This will be the lobby of the Dexter-Balsco-something building. It will be beautiful. If it ever gets built.
If I was going to work in a building, this is where I'd work.
Daddy wanted to paint covers for paperbacks, but he didn't. Cause publishers are *dumb*, Mommy says.
Sometimes when he thinks I'm asleep, Daddy stabs the drawings he makes with his pencil, over and over, and says bad things.

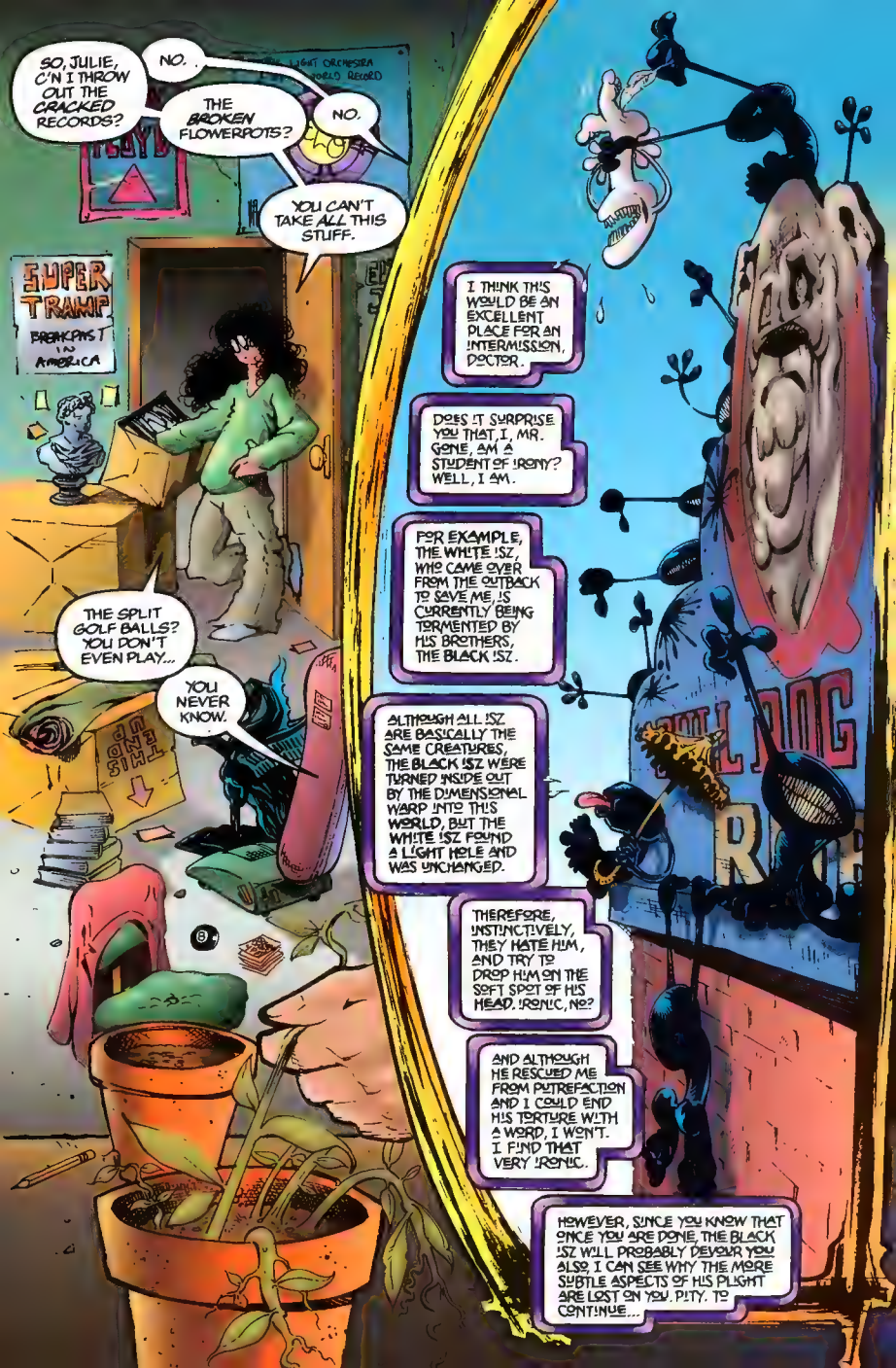

Daddy always smells like a closet with a lot of polished shoes and hats in it.
Mommy is pretty. But she always says how she's "just a ditherbrain."
RRRR

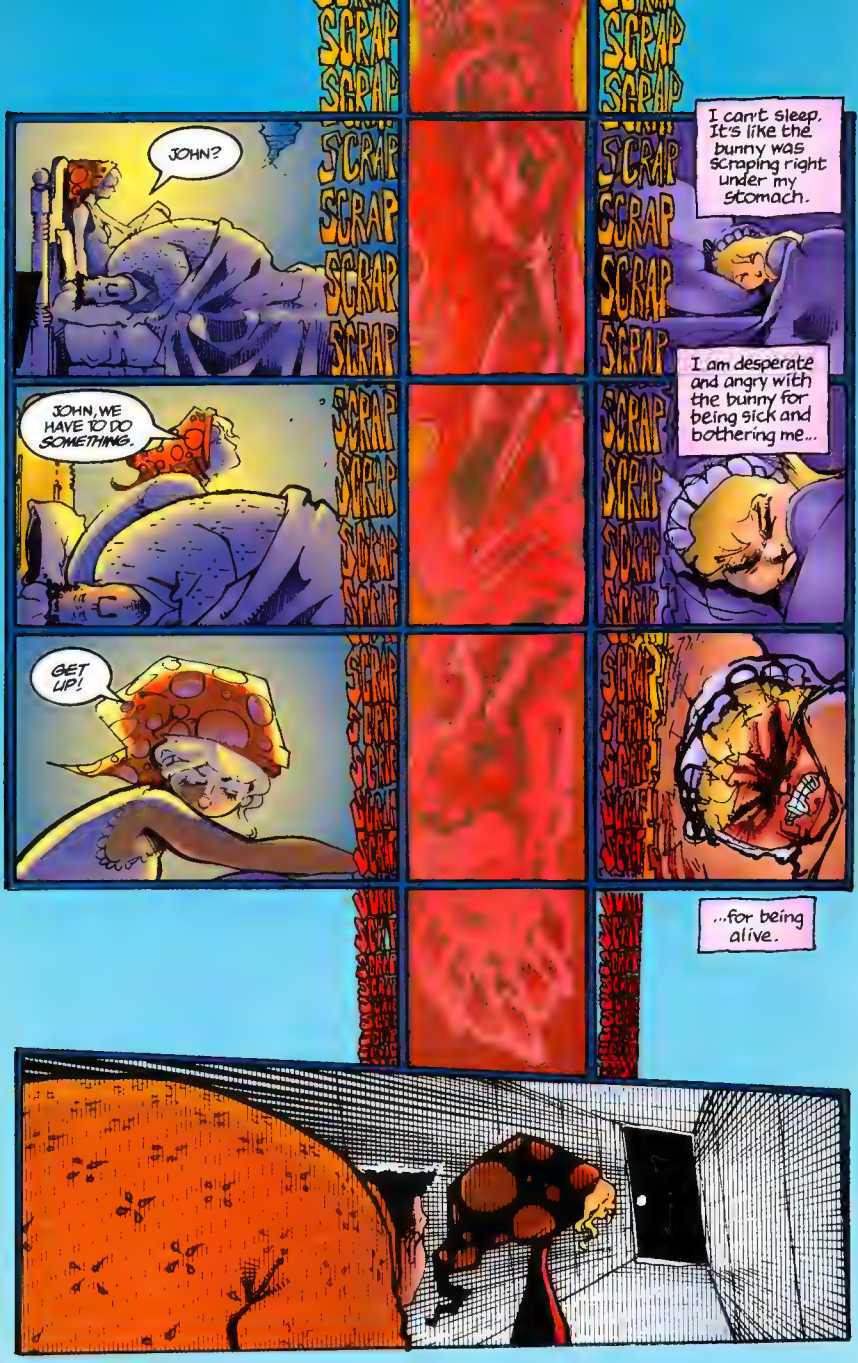
Daddy and I have a lot in common—bugs, for instance.
Ick! A bug!
ICK! A BUG!
MAYBE IF WE DON'T DO ANYTHING, IT'LL JUST WALK OUT OF HERE ON ITS OWN.
UH-OH...
TIME FOR DINNER, EVERYBODY!
CRUNCH!
Mommy always does what has to be done. Something in her shuts off...
...and then she pretends it didn't happen.
I guess that's what being a Mommy is all about.

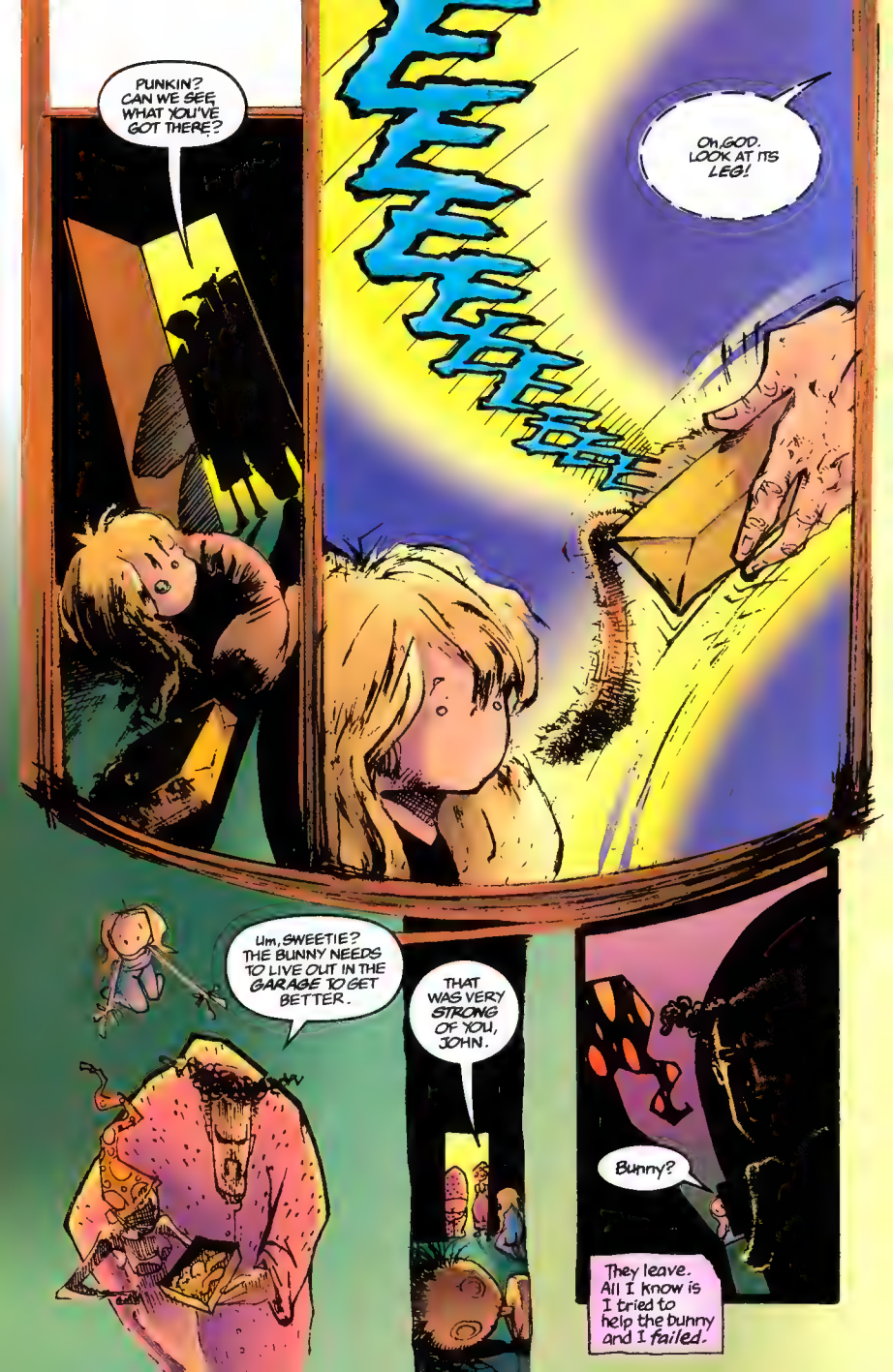
ONE DAY
SKREEEEEE
QUSAK
I find a bunny in the road...
...squashed like a piece of clay.
But I figure I can make it better...
...like I fix my houses after I smash them with a hammer.
I didn't know bunnies could scream.
Screaming.
It's hurt.
Like the clay I make my pretend houses out of.
My stomach hurts.
But all it does is look up at me... and wait.
So I take it home, so it can be my friend. It's not screaming anymore.


Uncle Artie came to visit one day. I thought Mom said he moved.
He just went to Australia, but now he's back.
He stays down the hall from me.
CLICK
Sometimes he whistles.
I guess I like him okay.
AIRWHALES! AND FLYING SNAILS BIG AS Y'R FIST!
Except when he makes too much noise to hear Captain Kangaroo...
Sometimes I think he looks just like my doll...
Daddy likes to talk to him for hours, to laugh with him. Then he leaves.
Just drives away.
Leaving me alone...
...alone with my little friend.
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP

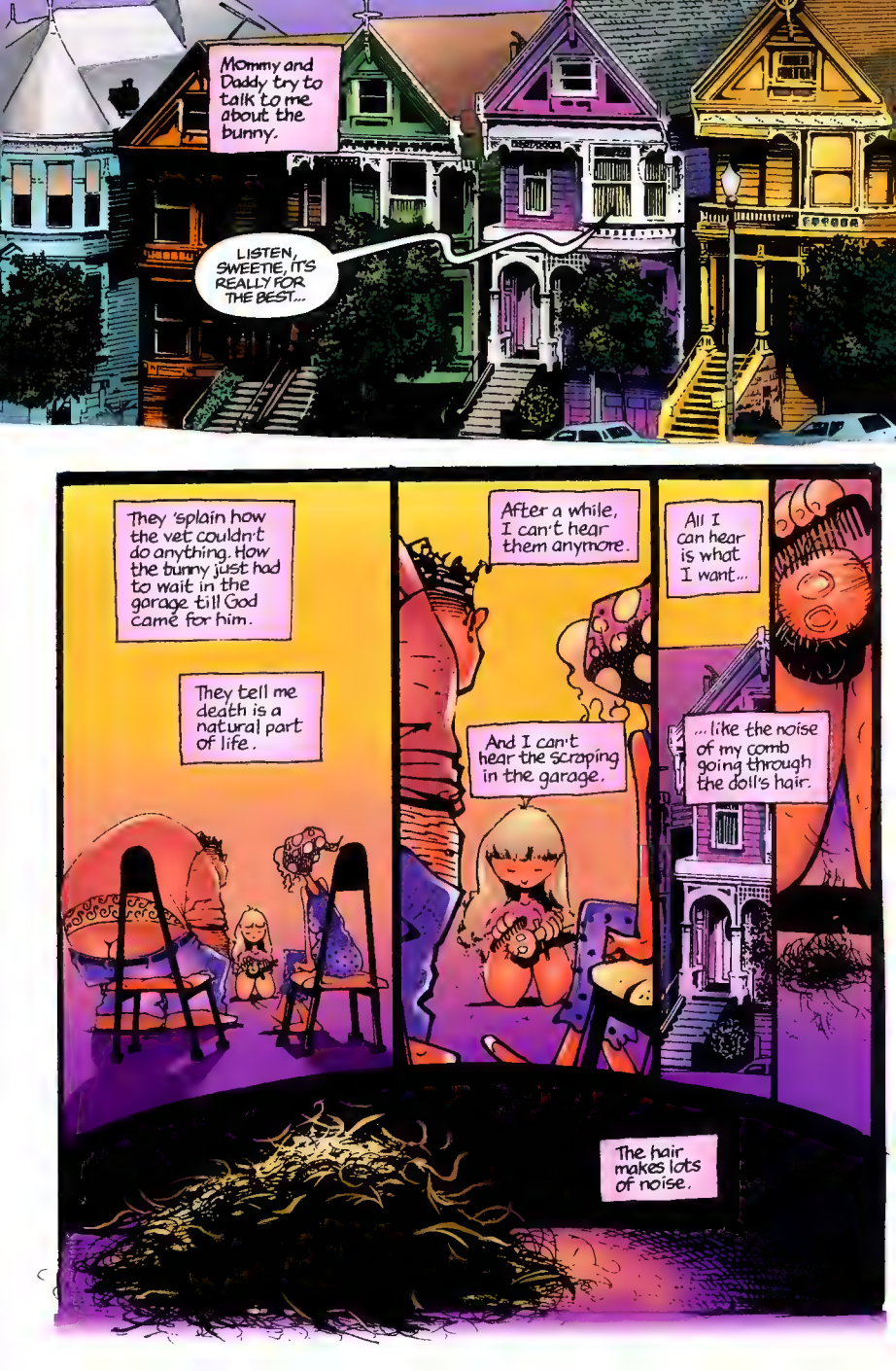
The bunny is under my bed all the time now.
It doesn't get better. It just makes this little scraping noise with its good leg.
I can hear it all the time now.
Even when I'm in the yard under my tree.
G'NIGHT, PUNKIN.
SCRAP SCRAP SCRAP

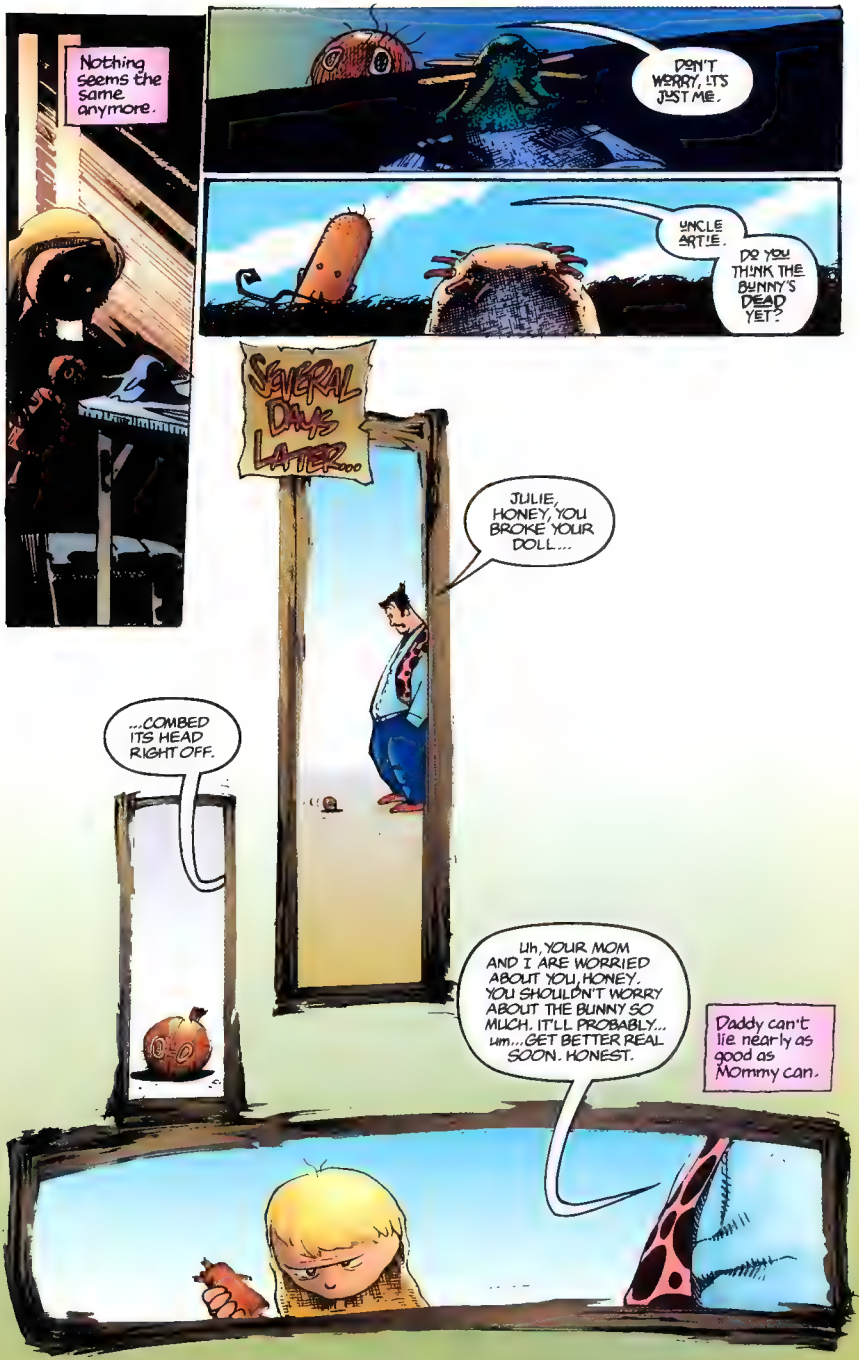

SO, JULIE, C'N I THROW OUT THE CRACKED RECORDS?
NO.
THE BROKEN FLOWERPOTS?
NO.
YOU CAN'T TAKE ALL THIS STUFF.
SUPER TRAMP
BREAKFAST IN AMERICA
THE SPLIT GOLF BALLS? YOU DON'T EVEN PLAY...
YOU NEVER KNOW.
THIS END UP
I THINK THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT PLACE FOR AN !NTERM!SS!ON, DOCTOR.
DOES IT SURPRISE YOU THAT, I, MR. GONE, AM A STUDENT OF !RONY? WELL, I AM.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE WH!TE !SZ, WHO CAME OVER FROM THE OUTBACK TO SAVE ME, !S CURRENTLY BEING TORMENTED BY H!S BROTHERS, THE BLACK !SZ.
ALTHOUGH ALL !SZ ARE BASICALLY THE SAME CREATURES, THE BLACK !SZ WERE TURNED !NSIDE OUT BY THE D!MENS!ONAL WARP !NTO TH!S WORLD, BUT THE WH!TE !SZ FOUND A L!GHT HOLE AND WAS UNCHANGED.
THEREFORE, !NST!NCT!VELY, THEY HATE H!M, AND TRY TO DROP H!M ON THE SOFT SPOT OF H!S HEAD. !RON!C, NO?
AND ALTHOUGH HE RESCUED ME FROM PUTREFACTION AND I COULD END H!S TORTURE W!TH A WORD, I WON'T. I F!ND THAT VERY !RON!C.
HOWEVER, S!NCE YOU KNOW THAT ONCE YOU ARE DONE, THE BLACK !SZ W!LL PROBABLY DEVOUR YOU ALSO, I CAN SEE WHY THE MORE SUBTLE ASPECTS OF H!S PLIGHT ARE LOST ON YOU. P!TY. TO CONT!NUE...

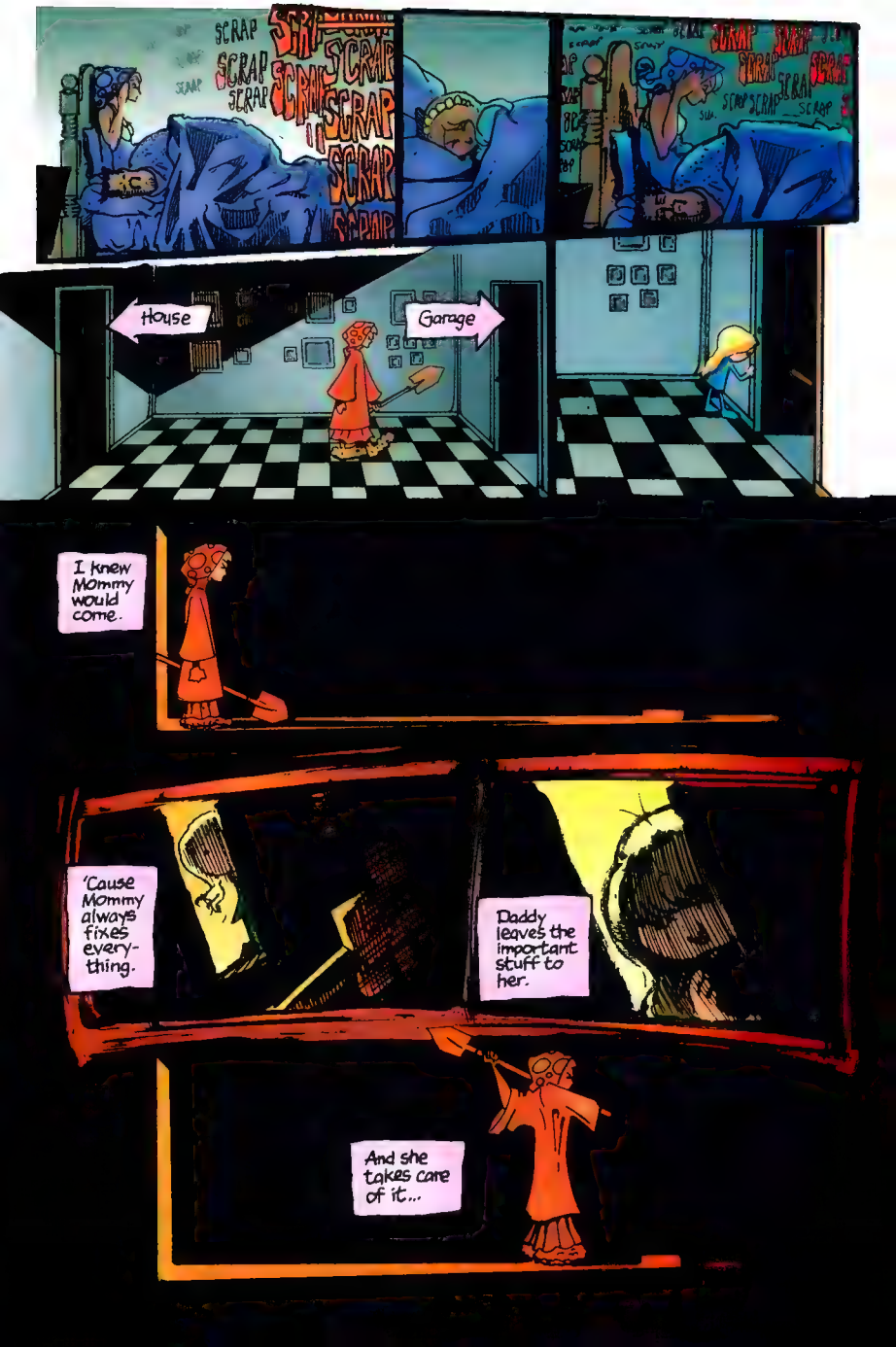

SCRAP
JOHN?
I can't sleep. It's like the bunny was scraping right under my stomach.
I am desperate and angry with the bunny for being sick and bothering me...
JOHN, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
GET UP!
...for being alive.


PUNKIN? CAN WE SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT THERE?
EEEEEEEEEE
OH, GOD. LOOK AT ITS LEG!
UM, SWEETIE? THE BUNNY NEEDS TO LIVE OUT IN THE GARAGE TO GET BETTER.
THAT WAS VERY STRONG OF YOU, JOHN.
Bunny?
They leave. All I know is I tried to help the bunny and I failed.

DO YOU HAVE THE GUACAMOLE KNIVES?
DID YOU WRAP THE 25 STAR TREK® COMMEMORATIVE MUGS?
WHAT ABOUT THE BUSTER KEATON KALEIDOSCOPE AND PEN KNIFE?
YEP.
YEP.
GOT IT.
WOMEN, GEEZ! I KNOW HOW TO CARRY STUFF!
DID YOU TELL HIM YET, JULIE?
WHAT? THAT I THINK WE HAVE A CO-DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP AND THAT I'M LEAVING THE CITY? I DON'T KNOW HOW.
THAT'S A GOOD WAY. TELL HIM THAT.
RIGHT. YOU TELL HIM.
YOU'RE THE ONE HE'S MORBIDLY DEPENDENT ON... AROUND WHOM HE'S BASED HIS WHOLE PAINFUL, LONELY, MISERABLE EXISTENCE... WHO IS THE ONLY SUPPORT HE HAS IN A COLD---
SARAH, MAKE THIS HARDER, WHY DON'T YOU?
HEY, MAYBE I DON'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE EITHER!
SLAM


Mommy and Daddy try to talk to me about the bunny.
LISTEN, SWEETIE, IT'S REALLY FOR THE BEST...
They 'splain how the vet couldn't do anything. How the bunny just had to wait in the garage till God came for him.
They tell me death is a natural part of life.
After a while, I can't hear them anymore.
And I can't hear the scraping in the garage.
All I can hear is what I want...
...like the noise of my comb going through the doll's hair.
The hair makes lots of noise.

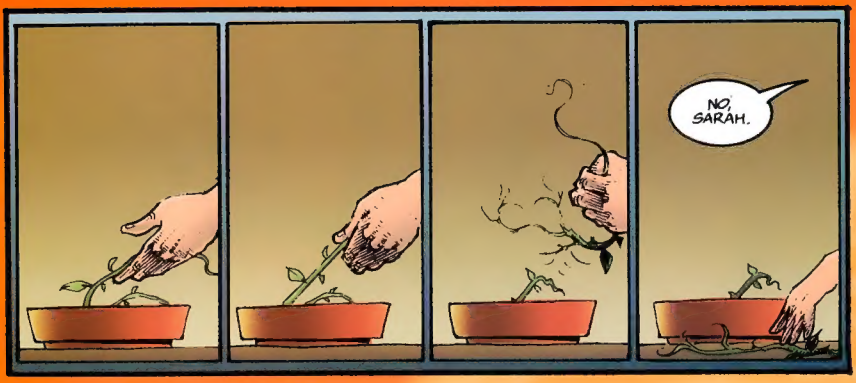

Nothing seems the same anymore.
DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST ME.
UNCLE ARTIE.
DO YOU THINK THE BUNNY'S DEAD YET?
SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
JULIE, HONEY, YOU BROKE YOUR DOLL...
...COMBED ITS HEAD RIGHT OFF.
UH, YOUR MOM AND I ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, HONEY. YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE BUNNY SO MUCH. IT'LL PROBABLY... UM... GET BETTER REAL SOON. HONEST.
Daddy can't lie nearly as good as Mommy can.

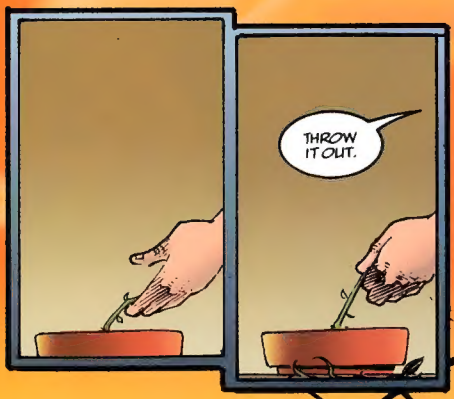

SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
House
Garage
I knew Mommy would come.
'Cause Mommy always fixes every-thing.
Daddy leaves the important stuff to her.
And she takes care of it...

...or makes it disappear...so we don't have to think about it

SO THAT'S HOW OUR LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT ENDS, DOCTOR. NOT WITH A WHIMPER, BUT WITH A... TWAKK! PRETTY AMUSING, EH?
LITTLE JULIE NEVER DID MENTION THAT INCIDENT. NEITHER DID HER MOTHER OR HER FATHER. PRETTY QUIET FAMILY, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT.
SOMETHING IN JULIE SHUT OFF THAT NIGHT. IN A WAY, SHE'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS OLD EVER SINCE. JULIE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM HER MOM IN THAT MOMENT, SOMETHING THAT SHE WOULD USE YEARS LATER WHEN ATTACKED AND LEFT FOR DEAD: THE ABILITY TO SUPPRESS... TO SUBMERGE... AND TO BURY.
JULIE'S MOTHER LEARNED IT FROM HER MOTHER BEFORE HER. PASSED DOWN, MOTHER TO DAUGHTER... THE PAIN OF FACING IT VERSUS THE PAIN OF KEEPING IT DOWN.
LIKE ALL THAT CRAP IN JULIE'S HOUSE -- USELESS JUNK SHE JUST WON'T LET GO OF, BURIED IN THE CLOSET. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT'S A NO-WIN PROPOSITION, EH DOC?

BUT ACTUALLY, YOU COULDN'T SAY ANY OF THAT, COULD YOU, DOCTOR?
YOU AREN'T, AS WE SAY, ALL THERE.
WELL, MOST OF YOU IS THERE... BUT SOME OF YOU IS THERE... SOME OF YOU IS OVER THERE... YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
AU REVOIR, DOC. IT'S BEEN SWELL.
SO, YOU READY?
JUST ABOUT. THINGS ARE A LOT *CLEARER* AROUND HERE NOW.
WHEN I WAS TRAPPED IN THE OUTBACK, I KEPT MEETING LITTLE VERSIONS OF MYSELF.
I THINK THAT MEANS THERE'S STILL A LOT OF STUFF TO LEARN ABOUT MYSELF, BEFORE I CAN START SCREWING WITH OTHER PEOPLE.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE KEEPING THIS OLD RUSTY SHOVEL, TOO?





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